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ABSTRACT

In order for education to be truly progressive, it is necessary to recognize that some innovations are merely ideas resurrected from the past. An example of this is bilingual education, which is growing in popularity throughout the country as a means of instructing non-English speaking children. An examination of historical documents reveals that bilingual education was a reality in California as early as the mid-1860's in San Francisco's Cosmopolitan School. In recognition of the young child's language learning facility, French, German, Spanish, and English were taught, and classes in other subject areas were taught in several languages. Thus, the current trend of bilingual educational research and experimentation would be benefitted if the educators involved recognized the difference between those ideas which are new and those which are not, in order to gain from experience. (LG)

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THE COSMOPOLITAN SCHOOL OR SO WHAT ELSE ISN'T NEW?

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Keeping up with innovations in teaching and learning a second language is a full time effort at the State Department of Education in Sacramento. Some so-called innovations are merely ideas resurrected from a forgotten past. Those who do not know history are destined to repeat it. Those who press forward an idea as an "innovation" should make sure that the idea is truly new. I should like to discuss a topic which is growing in popularity and which is receiving financial support at the school district level, the state level, and the federal level. Bilingual education has become a topic of interest throughout the nation. One of Dr. Wilson Riles' first concerns when he became California State Superintendent of Public Instruction was to establish a Bilingual/Bicultural Task Force to give assistance to those public school districts interested in establishing quality instructional programs for children with non-English-speaking and with limited-English-speaking ability.

To place an early bilingual school in its proper setting, let me first present some California history. The foundation of the public school system of California was laid in the Constitutional Convention held in Monterey, September 1849.[1] At that time it was specified that a school should be kept in each district at least three months in each year. In 1866 the average length of time during which the public schools were in operation was 7.2 months per year. In 1868 the largest city in California was San Francisco with a population of 115,700 of which 34,710 were children under fifteen years of age. Sacramento was the second largest with 12,993 citizens. San Jose with 6,723 was larger than Los

1. John Swett, History of the Public School System of California, A. L. Bancroft and Company, (San Francisco, 1876), p. 1.

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Angeles with its population of 5,983. The next largest in order were Stockton (5,307), Oakland (5,123), Grass Valley (4,573), Marysville (4,203), Santa Barbara (3,823) and Nevada City (3,743).

Since in population and in political and educational importance San Francisco was in unquestioned lead in the Golden State, remarks will be directed toward developments in the San Francisco Bay Area. The first school house in San Francisco was erected late in 1847 on the plaza on the southwest corner of Clay Street and Brenham Place. It opened on April 3, 1848 with six pupils. In May, 37 were in attendance, and after gold was discovered that year, the attendance dwindled to 8 pupils and the teacher left to go prospecting.

I recently came across a copy of the California Teacher, a periodical which began as a monthly educational journal in 1863 with John Swett and Samuel I. C. Swezey as managing editors. In 1865 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction was made an ex officio editor.[2] The copy dated October 1867 contained a letter from John Swett, Superintendent of Public Instruction, to John C. Pelton, Superintendent of Public Schools of the City and County of San Francisco.[3] In the letter John Swett comments upon the Cosmopolitan School, a creation of the San Francisco public school district.

> "The school meets a great want of the people. If children are to learn the modern languages at all, they should begin in the primary departments. I am confident that after three years' instruction it will be found that the pupils, while acquiring a knowledge of French, German, or Spanish, will have made equal progress in the ordinary, common school studies with those in other schools, who have been occupied exclusively in studying the English language. It is not strange that so marked an innovation on the old system of education should have excited some doubts as to its success, and some hostility to its progress; but the school having demonstrated, to a considerable extent, its own value, has

2. John Swett, op. cit., p. 213. In 1876 the Legislature cut off the financial support which ended the publication of the California Teacher. In June of 1966 the Legislature cut off the financial support of California Education, official publication of the California State Department of Education.
3. Volume V, Number 4, pp. 131-2. Mr. Swett's letter is dated August 2, 1867.

> now become a part of our practical system of public instruction, which few desire to dispense with, and which all thinkers and scholars will cherish and protect."
> ". . .for the object of a public school system is to give the children of the people such a practical education as the spirit of the age requires, and such as the citizens, gathered from all nationalities, may demand."

The fame of San Francisco's Cosmopolitan School spread. The following quotation is from a letter of a correspondent of the New York Times who described in detail the plan of this bilingual program.

> "This city, as is well known, is made up of various nationalities. It was early seen that it was of the greatest possible advantage to both Americans and foreign-born to learn each other's language. As the Committee on this subject reported to the Board of Education: "They felt in their full force the profound words of Goethe, 'He who knows but his own language, does not even know that.'" Accordingly, Primary Schools were opened, in which French and English, and in others French and German were taught, and these by regular gradation culminated in the excellent school so happily name above--the "Cosmopolitan School." Here all the regular school branches, such as reading, grammar, geography, history and arithmetic, are taught in French, German, and English. Most of the school exercises are conducted in a foreign tongue. It is well known that at a certain tender age a boy or girl catches a foreign language with wonderful readiness, such as they never show when more mature; this is especially the case if conversation and oral instruction be in that same tongue. The result of this enlightened system in this school was evident. The sons of many Americans--some of the wealthiest families in the city--were sent here to learn French or German, and at the same time to acquire ordinary school instruction. These lads recited or answered, with a readiness and purity of accent not often witnessed; while the French and German boys and girls preserve their own tongue in grammatical purity (a great advantage among a population which so soon depraves its language), and learned English in addition. The different grammars were not at all confused by the children; in fact, were better learned by the contrast, as English grammar is always best learned by your children, not in abstract definitions, but by the analysis of a foreign language, especially if it employs case-endings.
> . . .We ought to have in New York a dozen such public schools for our own and the foreign-descended children."[4]

4. California Teacher, Vol. V, Number 8, February 1868 issue. The quotation is from an October 22, 1867 letter to the editor.

The linguistic and pedagogical reasoning behind learning languages at an early age expressed by the New York Times correspondent in 1867 is still sound. We are in a cycle today in which the bilingual programs are receiving renewed recognition--but the programs are not innovative; in California, bilingual programs are a century-old idea. New instructional materials in foreign languages, methods, and equipment are produced so frequently that an annotated bibliography arrives from the printer already a bit out-of-date. The two bibliographies of instructional materials in Spanish published by the California State Department of Education are being followed by ones in German, French, Portuguese, and a third Spanish materials bibliography. Next year work will be started on a Latin bibliography.

It is interesting to note that occasionally the California Teacher contained annotations of recently published school books. The following excerpt was taken from the May 1868 issue:

> Elementary German Grammar. By Jas. H. Norman, A. M. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., San Francisco: H. H. Bancroft & Co. pp. 222 This book was not needed, and if it had been its author was not the man to make it. It attempts a thing already better done by several abler predecessors, whose amply successful labors the present author seems not to know, and cannot even approximate. The paper is ordinary, the type worn, and the press-work poor. The smaller the edition the better for the public and the publishers.

The annotated bibliographies being compiled by statewide committees of foreign language teachers do not contain such sharp-tongued comments; mention of poor or inadequate material is omitted.

In a December 1867 issue of California Teacher under "Resident Editors Department" is another annotation of newly published material.

> "The Mètric System--of weights and measures--prepared to accompany Eaton's Common School Arithmetic. . .has just been published. . .It comprises in twelve pages all that

> is needed to give pupils the theory and practice required for a thorough comprehension of the metric system, and is admirably adapted to supply to teachers and scholars almost the only deficiency that has heretofore existed in this favorite series of arithmetical text-books."

Foreign language teachers have included reference to the metric system in their instruction wherever understanding of a different culture required it. Recent decisions of the federal and state legislatures indicate that more emphasis will be placed upon the learning and eventual adoption of the metric system in American life.

In the never ending search for better ways to teach, foreign language teachers must be Janus-faced and examine not only those fresh new ideas which are purported to be innovative but see the past experience of those who also have sought improvements--and found them. There are many other so-called innovations which are travelers from ancient lands parading in colorful mod unisex clothing. So what else isn't new??